

**VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Culinary Arts Room (C208), Northwest Technical Center,  
71 South Main Street, St. Albans  
May 19, 2009**

*The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.*

**Approved Minutes – May 15, 2009**

**Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Tess Savage; Kathy Larsen; Brian Vachon; John Hall; Alex Melville; Fayneese Miller; Don Collins**

**DOE Staff: Commissioner Armando Vilaseca; Carol King; Jill Remick; Mark Oettinger; Rae Ann Knopf; Greg Glennon**

**Others: Mike Bartini, College Board; Deb Markowitz, Secretary of State; Sherry Gile, VTNEA; Tina Carroll; Peter Hermann, VSBA; Dave Larsen; EDGE Academy staff Jim Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Schools, Ellen Thompson, Lindsay Halman, Elizabeth Ploof, Alison Levy, Ethel Goldstein**

**Preliminaries**

**Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance**

Tom James, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:21 a.m., and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item B: Roll Call and Introductions**

Chair James and Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

**Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates**

Kathy Larsen attended the Vermont Superintendents Association and Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators conference. She reported on the guest speaker Michael Horn, author of Disruptive Innovation.

Tess Savage spoke about the Vermont Youth Leadership Conference that she and Commissioner Vilaseca will be attending.

Vice-chair Ruth Stokes reported that Bill Corrow, former Board member, recently underwent surgery.

Chair James asked the members to consider facilitating the Board's self-evaluation process. He also asked if all members had received the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) new board member orientation materials and would consider going to the conference. He also noted recent NASBE materials about state innovations, and that the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) received national mention in that update. Transformation is also mentioned in those materials. James also noted Project UTurn from Philadelphia, which is a graduation completion program.

Don Collins noted the tough and good work being done by Kay Charron with the Transformation Policy Commission.

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**Item D: Civic Education Survey** (Secretary of State Deb Markowitz)

Secretary of State Deb Markowitz discussed the results of the 2007 Vermont High School Student Survey, a survey conducted jointly by her office and VSAC, which included questions about civic education. The results show that students who participate in mock elections and civic education classes and are otherwise able to observe and participate in elections, are more likely to be involved, participate and be active in community and political actions throughout their life.

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**Item E: Public to be Heard**

No one was signed up to speak at that time.

**Item F: April Monthly Report** (Tom James, Chair)

Chair James reminded the audience that this monthly communication tool is designed to keep everyone better informed to the work going on at the Board meetings. He also noted there may be a different way to handle the student recognition event, either regionally or as part of an event at the Statehouse.

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**Item G: Commissioner's Update** (Armando Vilaseca)

Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner, spoke to the Board about a few announcements. Deputy Commissioner of Transformation Bill Romond will be retiring in June. Vilaseca noted that this will be a huge loss but the Transformation is bigger than any one person, the Board or DOE. He will continue as a member of the Policy Commission. Director of Lifelong Learning Dave White will be leaving the Department at the end of June to serve as the director of curriculum, instruction and assessment at the Lamoille North SU. This is occurring at a time when several staff positions have been eliminated as part of the state budget rescissions. Both White and Romond will be at the June meeting. Larsen asked if there was a way to acknowledge those who are being laid off as well as Romond and White. Stokes asked for a list of those employees so they can reach out personally if they worked with them in the past.

Commissioner Vilaseca also reported on the visit by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who gave the commencement speech at St. Michael's College, then visited Barnes Elementary School in Burlington. This school is also becoming a sustainability magnet school, is participating in the Vermont FEED program, and is the most diverse in the state. Duncan then went to the Westford Elementary School to see a rural school as part of his "Listen and Learn" tour. He also met informally with Vermont teachers the night before these events. Vilaseca regrets that principals and superintendents did not get an opportunity to speak directly with Duncan.

Vilaseca also gave the commencement address at Burlington College. He also attended and led a panel at the Summit on the Future of Vermont. He also participated in the VSA/VCSEA conference. Also, the VPA will be hiring a new executive director in June as the current director Bob Stevens is retiring. Commissioner Vilaseca also shared that the Department will have to undergo reorganization which was forced by the cuts to staff and the need to realign services to

better serve the field. Larsen noted that as a lifelong educator in Vermont she always felt supported by the Department.

**Item H: Legislative Update** (Armando Vilaseca, Mark Oettinger)

Vilaseca noted that, with the passage of H.427, all schools are now required to identify students at risk of dropping out in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade. General Counsel Mark Oettinger provided a brief summary of the legislative session. He noted the Governor intends, at this point, to veto the budget, which includes education related issues, the Education Fund, Teacher Retirement, and the formation of a study commission of 15 individuals to study the structure and funding of Vermont education. Chair James encouraged the Legislature and this commission to be sure to include the Department, Board and commissioner in these discussions as experts in education. The language includes the Department as staff to the commission. Oettinger noted the provision in the bill for the Department adds five new positions, which are limited service positions for the American Recovery and Reinvestment (ARRA) (Stimulus Package) Act. In two years these positions will expire, and they are funded through ARRA to administer the work of the Department as required by the US DOE. Oettinger also spoke on H. 427 and the Miscellaneous Education Bill.

Oettinger also spoke about the military program for children whose parents are being deployed.

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**Action Items**

**Item I: Consent Agenda**

James reiterated that the goal of the consent agenda is to reduce lengthy discussions on several different topics. Any Board member can request that an item be pulled for separate discussion.

**Motion:** Kathy Larsen moved, seconded by Brian Vachon, to approve the Consent Agenda with comment. Brian Vachon recused himself from the vote (NECI item). Hall noted that he would recuse himself from the vote (Royal Windsor Academy, Bethel). James reviewed the items on the consent agenda:

1. **Minutes of April 14, 2009 SBE Meeting**
2. **Independent School Approval** (Pat Pallas Gray, Kerry Garber)  
Initial General and Special Education Approval:  
Royal-Windsor Academy, Bethel (grades 5-12)  
Renewal of General and Special Education Approval:  
Brookhaven Learning Center, Chelsea (males age 6-14 in grades K-8)  
Renewal of Tutorial Program Approval  
Mountainside House Tutorial Program, Ludlow & Proctorsville (ages 13-18)  
Acknowledge of independent school closing:  
Pine Ridge School, Williston  
Wheeler Mountain Academy, Barton
3. **Approval of Post Secondary Degree Granting Authority** (Laura Glass, Kerry Garber)  
River Valley Community College (RVCC)  
New England Culinary Institute (NECI)
4. **Windsor School Board Student Attendance Day Request** (Mark Oettinger)

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote 6-0 (Abstain: Vachon, Hall).

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James acknowledged the arrival of former Board member Rick Manahan, St. Albans.

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### **Discussion Items**

#### **Item J: National Common Core MOA** (Armando Vilaseca, Board members)

Commissioner Armando Vilaseca discussed the document the Board received, which he and the Governor have agreed to sign. Crafted by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) asks participants to consider national standards. The MOA does not bind states to the standards; it is a commitment to participate in the process. It ensures that no state will be asked to lower its current standards. The four NECAP (New England Common Assessment Program) states – Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Maine - have agreed to sign this together. Vilaseca did note concern that ACT and SAT are part of the development process. He also noted that Measured Progress is conducting an alignment analysis on the MCATs and NECAPs. James noted that the Board voting in favor does not dictate that the Board will agree with the conclusion.

**Motion:** Ruth Stokes moved, seconded by Miller, to authorize the commissioner to proceed with signing the CCSSO/NGA Memorandum of Agreement. Motion passed unanimously (7-0).

#### **Item K: Public School Choice** (Tom James, Board members)

Chair James noted that following this discussion today, a more focused discussion on the merits and specifics of a school choice proposal is planned for a future meeting. Stokes noted the link between the Transformation effort and the concept of school choice, as far as ensuring students get what they need, have flexibility in deciding their needs, and are being given every opportunity to succeed. The context of school choice has gone further since it was discussed in 2005. Collins noted that due to the Legislative changes outlined earlier which included school choice items, this needs to become a priority. Hall noted the change to the language from the earlier discussion on H.427 is concerning to him because it seems to make school choice punitive.

Tina Carroll, a parent from Cambridge, spoke to the Board in support of school choice. She does not feel the current high school option available to her family has adequate programs for students who excel, and believes that there are other public high schools in her area that have better programs and are located closer to her residence. She indicated that her family would do whatever it could do to transport their daughter and are willing to pay the tuition difference between sending her there and the local union school.

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### **Lunch**

Lunch was prepared and served by students attending the Northwest Technical Center's Culinary Arts Program, under the direction of Mike Antoniak, instructor.

The meeting was called back to order at 12:54 p.m.

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### **Discussion Items (continued)**

#### **Item L: Northwest Technical Center Farm to Table Program**

Superintendent Bob Rosane, Marilyn Savoy and Tim Smith spoke to the Board, noting that Franklin County is a county where half of the jobs are related to or indirectly related to agriculture. This initiative links economic development and education. The schools reflect the community. NECI is a partner for the K-16 continuum and beyond. This district serves 3,000 students and 1,500 adults. Smith distributed information on the Farm to Table program (see handout). Marilyn Savoy spoke on the importance of the adult education program. All their programs are geared at the community connection and the support of new businesses.

#### **Item M: Proposed Revisions to Special Education Rules (Karin Edwards)**

Karin Edwards, Director of Student Support, spoke to the Board about revisions to the federal legislation and therefore to state special education rules. The most substantial change is in the area of parents' right to revoke or refuse services at any time. It is anticipated that the Board will vote on the initiation of the rulemaking process with respect to the proposed revisions to special education rules at its June meeting

#### **Item N: FY 2009 & 2010 Budget/ARRA (Stimulus) Update (Armando Vilaseca, Rae Ann Knopf)**

Commissioner Vilaseca briefly updated the Board on the current DOE budget, noting that the budget bill as yet has not been signed by the Governor. The Board has a copy of the proposed and expected budget. Rae Ann Knopf, ARRA Coordinator and Assistant Director of Student Support, recently presented information at the VSA/VCSEA conference. The guidance from the department was well received and appreciated. She handed out a document which is a table summarizing how the ARRA money will flow to supervisory unions and schools. At present Title I and IDEA funds and child nutrition school equipment program funds have arrived. Funds are not available for spending until July 1. There is some concern with the state budget not being passed and therefore the application for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund has not been submitted (due July 1, 2009). The Race to the Top application is due October 1. The Longitudinal Data Systems Grant application is due June 1. The Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant encourages partnerships with high needs districts and higher education. There is also a competitive grant for districts called Innovation and What Works – LEAs need to demonstrate that they have raised student achievement.

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### **Transformation of Education**

#### **Item O: Transformation and ARRA (Armando Vilaseca, Rae Ann Knopf, Kay Charron)**

Kay Charron noted that the ARRA money is a windfall, an opportunity to make some significant progress in Vermont education. The challenge is to ensure that the guidance the department provides keeps the ARRA and Transformation work aligned. Charron outlined six core Transformation areas, and linked them with ARRA money. She updated the Board on the work of the Education Transformation Policy Commission. She also clarified that the primary work of the department will be focused on Transformation. Another advantage of linking these two initiatives is the idea of making changes to practice to save funding so there is no funding “cliff” when the ARRA money is gone. The department work is about the “spirit of influence” since it cannot mandate to schools how the money is spent beyond the federal requirements.

**Item P: Education Transformation Policy Commission Update** (Kay Charron)

Charron updated the Board on the current work of the Policy Commission, which is coalescing around what Transformation really is and what the tasks are. They have synthesized that list and identified six specific high leverage strategies and have broken into subcommittees to work on those strategies. They have also identified the expected reaction to policy changes and who they would impact. On June 8, Linda Darling-Hammond, national education transformation expert, will be speaking to the group about the most important policy levers to transformation via teleconference (11:30 a.m., DOE at 302).

**Item R: *The Edge Academy* – Essex Town School District** (Jim Fitzpatrick, Superintendent of Schools, Ellen Thompson, Lindsay Halman, Elizabeth Ploof, Alison Levy, Ethel Goldstein)

Two and a half years ago the school started looking at Daniel Pink's work for their district. Fitzpatrick also heard about the innovator's dilemma, disruptive innovation, and Disrupting Class on how you change an institution like public education. Fitzpatrick took a team to Harvard to talk with them. The one thing schools always had was textbooks and information so you had to come to school. Now the information is accessible to all at any time. The role of school needs to change. Teach to the child, nurture self-learning. This district developed a transformation design center with the help of faculty teams. The focus is on the individual with their own customized learning strategy. The Academy is designed for ages 9-14. There are no grades, students will be grouped by "readiness groups", there are flexible school hours and students will demonstrate learning with an online portfolio. Learning also takes place online and with the community. The school will open September 2 in the wing of the middle school.

**Item Q: School Quality Standards Rule 2122 – Waiver Request** (Armando Vilaseca, Gail Taylor)

Commissioner Vilaseca explained that the Department will be asking the State Board in June to waive the reporting and visit requirements contained in Rule 2122 of the School Quality Standards. At this time, the commissioner does not believe to be prudent to dedicate department staff and school staff time in a review process, the content of which may need to be substantially changed because of the work of the Education Transformation Policy Commission and the upcoming strategic planning process. Additionally, department staff are facing adjusted work because of ARRA requirements at the same time positions are being cut. SQS must be factored into any restructuring necessary to address all critical tasks. There is no statutory requirement for either the status report or the on-site visits. The Commissioner will continue to have authority (16 V.S.A. §165 (e)) to determine at any time that an individual school does not meet the School Quality Standards and take appropriate action to ensure compliance.

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**Item S: Future Agendas** (Board members; Armando Vilaseca; Tom James)

The June meeting of the State Board will happen on June 22 and 23 at Lake Morey and will be a Strategic Planning meeting. James discussed what the expectations were for the Strategic Plan, and the focus on Transformation, governance, consolidation and school choice.

Collins commended Commissioner Vilaseca for his memo to administrators about avoiding half days, which is convenient for educators but not students and their families. He also would like to bring the statewide school calendar issue back for future discussion.

**Adjourn**

**Motion:** At 3:35 p.m., Ruth Stokes moved, seconded by Kathy Larsen, to adjourn the May 19, 2009 meeting of the State Board of Education. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick  
Minutes prepared by Carol King